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AN ACCOUNT  
OF THE  
BATTLE OF BUNKER HILL  
( 1775. )

WITH A MAP.

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1918









**AN ACCOUNT**  
**OF THE**  
**BATTLE OF BUNKER HILL,**

**Compiled from Authentic Sources.**

**BY**

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**WITH**

**GENERAL BURGOYNE'S ACCOUNT OF  
THE BATTLE.**

**BOSTON:**  
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## BATTLE OF BUNKER HILL.

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**O**N the 15th of June, 1775, the Committee of Safety passed the following vote :—

“Whereas it appears of importance to the safety of this colony that possession of the hill called Bunker Hill, in Charlestown, be securely kept and defended, and also some one hill or hills on Dorchester Neck be likewise secured, therefore resolved, unanimously, that it be recommended to the Council of War that the above mentioned Bunker Hill be maintained by sufficient force being posted there; and as the particular situation of Dorchester Neck is unknown to this Committee, they advise

that the Council of War take and pursue such steps respecting the same as to them shall appear to be for the security of this colony.”

On the same day it was ordered, —

“That Captain Benjamin White and Colonel Joseph Palmer be a committee to join with the Committee from the Council of War, to proceed to the Roxbury Camp, there to consult with the general officers on matters of importance, and to communicate to them a resolve this day passed, in this Committee, respecting Bunker Hill in Charlestown, and Dorchester Neck.”

The detachments ordered to Charlestown, for the purpose of fortifying and holding Bunker Hill, consisted of about one thousand men, under the command of Colonel William Prescott, of Pepperell, in the county of Middlesex. General Putnam went with the detachments, as also Colonel Richard Gridley, who had been appointed

chief engineer. They proceeded to Charlestown late in the evening of the 16th of June. Pausing on Bunker Hill, after some consultation they concluded to advance to Breed's Hill, which lies nearer to Boston by about one hundred and twenty rods, and is about the same distance from the banks of Charles River. It was nearly midnight when they began to throw up a redoubt, as ordered by the council of war. The redoubt on the summit of the hill was about eight rods square. The strongest side, or front, in form of a redan, faced Charlestown, protecting the south side of the hill. The eastern side commanded a very extensive field, and a breastwork ran in a line with it north down to the slough. Between the south end of the breastwork and the redoubt was a narrow passage-way or sally-port, protected in front by a blind, and an open passage-way in the north side of the re-

doubt. It was determined, at the same time, that a work should be erected on Bunker Hill, as a new post and rallying point to resort to, should the enemy drive them from the first, and for the protection of the rear.

A large guard — Captain Maxwell and his company, some Connecticut and other troops — was detached to the shore of Charlestown to observe every movement of the enemy.

The works marked out, tools were distributed to the men; but midnight arrived before the first spade entered the ground. These men, working for their lives as well as liberties, performed prodigies of labor. They were instructed and stimulated by Putnam, Prescott, and other officers, among whom was Major Brooks, distinguished by the well-deserved confidence of the army. Just entered on manhood, he relinquished a lucrative profession, commenced

his military career at the battle of Lexington, as major of Bridge's regiment, and received the same rank in the army. He had been called home by sickness in his family, and received no order to march with his regiment; but the danger of his fellow-soldiers was a sufficient summons, and he hastened to join his corps, which he overtook at the neck.

It was clear starlight, and the proximity of the enemy demanded vigilant observation. Colonel Prescott proceeded to the shore with Major Brooks to reconnoitre them. Every thing was quiet; they distinctly heard the enemy relieving guard, and were rejoiced at the welcome cry from the sentries, however unfounded, "All's well."

The men quietly at their labors, General Putnam repaired to his camp to prepare for the anticipated crisis, by bringing on reinforcements, and to be fresh-mounted;

his furious riding required a frequent change of horses.

Prescott could hardly imagine that the enemy were so negligent of military caution as to suffer his powerful force to approach their very threshold unobserved. He advanced anew to examine their situation; again all was quiet, and the guard from the shore of Charlestown was ordered in.

By the dawn of the day the veil was lifted from the astonished eyes of the British. They perceived their daring enemy above them, overlooking their position, with formidable works which had sprung up as if by enchantment. The cannon of the "Lively" opened on the Americans, and roused their countrymen from secure repose to participate in the same surprise and astonishment.

General Gage sent an immediate summons to his officers to meet him in a council of war in the old State House.

Some other frigates, floating batteries, the "Somerset" line of battle ship, a formidable battery of the heaviest pieces, and a mortar on Copp's Hill, opened a tremendous fire on the Americans, sufficient to appall even veteran troops.

The fire was for some time without effect, but the men venturing in front of the works, one of them was killed by a cannon shot. At this time a number of the men went off and never returned.

To dispel the terror which this death occasioned, Prescott mounted on the works, and directed the labor. Heedless of all the fire of the enemy, he was wrought up to the highest pitch of enthusiasm, and transferred his own exaltation into every private under him. Owing to the oppressive heat, and the vehemence of his address, his bald head was exposed entirely uncovered; waving his sword, he sometimes upbraided his men in anger, and



sometimes encouraged them with approbation and humor.

General Gage, reconnoitring the enemy, handed his telescope to Willard, a mandamus counsellor, and inquired of him, "Who is that officer commanding?" He instantly recognized *his brother-in-law*, Colonel Prescott. "Will he fight?" asked Gage. "Yes, sir, depend upon it, to the last drop of blood in him; but I cannot answer for his men," was the reply.

The sufferings of the men were great: the heat was oppressive; during a sleepless night, they had unremittingly labored, without even water; and their small stock of provisions was exhausted. Their officers felt for them, and wished Colonel Prescott to send to Cambridge a request to be relieved. He convened a council of war, but instantly crushed the slightest hope of a relief. "The enemy would not dare attack them, and if they did, would be

defeated. The men who had raised the works were the best qualified to defend them: they had already learned to despise the fire of the enemy; they had the merit of the labor, and should enjoy the honor of the victory." With renewed ardor, the men continued their labors.

Captain Nutting, with some troops, was ordered into Charlestown, near the ferry, by Colonel Prescott, to guard against the enemy's approach on that side.

General Gage met his officers in council. They did not hesitate as to the indispensable necessity of driving the enemy from their formidable position, but found it impossible to agree on the mode of attack. General Clinton and General Grant advocated attacking the enemy in rear; but General Gage would not adopt a measure so adventurous. It was finally determined to land and attack the enemy in front.

At daybreak Putnam directed Lieutenant Clark to send to General Ward for a horse. The lieutenant went himself, but the general's impatience could not await an answer. On his return he found him mounted and departing. The summons from the "Lively" had frustrated his intention of carrying on the reinforcement himself; he reminded General Ward, however, that the fate of the expedition depended on his being reinforced immediately, according to the preconcerted plan, and flew to join his men on the hill.

The result of General Gage's council of war soon became apparent. The enemy were observed moving with rapidity through the streets of Boston; a corps of dragoons, manœuvring within view of the Americans, suddenly galloped off their parade ground; the rattling of artillery carriages and wagons was heard, and every note of preparation for a military

movement. Prescott, then believing the enemy would hazard an attack, was delighted. "Now, my boys, we shall have a fight, and shall beat them too," he observed. Fearless himself, he thought the world so too, and his confidence was too implicit in the raw troops and inexperienced commanders just collecting only, and hardly considered to be an army.

It was nine o'clock; the men were exhausted from hunger, thirst, fatigue, and want of sleep. Putnam had again repaired to Cambridge to procure provisions, and a reinforcement, become indispensable, but neither one nor the other had arrived. Colonel Prescott called another council of war; he refused, as before, to hear a word about displacing his men, but consented to send again for refreshments and a reinforcement. Major Brooks was selected to proceed to Cambridge and wait on General Ward for this purpose. For greater

expedition he was directed to take one of the artillery horses, but the order was vehemently opposed by Captain Gridley, who feared for the safety of his pieces. Prescott then directed him to proceed on foot, with as much dispatch as possible. He arrived at headquarters about ten, and made known his instructions to Ward. The general hesitated as to the policy of sending reinforcements to Charlestown, and doubted whether the intention of the enemy was to make his attack on that point. The scanty depots of ammunition, ordnance stores, and *matériel* of every species belonging to the army, on which the salvation of the country depended, were at Cambridge and Watertown; and he presumed the enemy designed to seize the present opportunity to make an attack at headquarters and gain possession of these stores.

The Committee of Safety were sitting

at the same house in which the general quartered, and he communicated to them the information and request brought by Major Brooks. Richard Devens, of Charlestown (afterwards commissary-general), was one of the committee. From deep anxiety for the success of the expedition and the protection of his native town from the inroad of the enemy, his importunity with the general and the committee for an ample reinforcement was impassioned and vehement, and his opinion partially prevailed; the committee recommended a reinforcement, and the general consented that orders should be dispatched immediately to Colonels Reed and Stark, at Medford, to join Prescott's detachment with the New Hampshire troops.

General Warren, chairman of the Committee of Safety, was present. The day before he had officiated as President of Congress at Watertown, and had passed

the night there in the accumulated concerns of the public. His friend, Hon. Elbridge Gerry, having learned the determination to occupy and fortify Bunker Hill, remonstrated with him against the glaring imprudence of the enterprise, with their feeble resources. "We had not powder sufficient to maintain the desperate conflict which must ensue, and should all be cut to pieces." Warren confessed he entertained the same opinion; but it was determined otherwise, and he was resolved to share the fate of his countrymen. His friend conjured him not to expose his invaluable life where his destruction would be useless and inevitable. "I know it," said the hero, "but I live within sound of the cannon, and should die were I to remain at home while my fellow-citizens are shedding their blood for me." "As sure as you go you will be slain," repeated Gerry. Warren's final

answer was, "*Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori.*" He arrived at Cambridge by daylight, sick with nervous headache, and threw himself on the bed. On receiving information that the enemy were coming out, Ward sent to notify him. He arose immediately, declared "his headache was gone," and after meeting with the Committee of Safety, mounted his horse, and with his fusil and sword repaired to the post of danger.

At eleven, the New Hampshire troops received orders from Cambridge; but, not being provided with ammunition, were quite unprepared to obey them. Every man was immediately supplied with two flints, and a gill of powder with fifteen balls to form into cartridges; but nearly all of them were destitute of cartridge-boxes, employing powder-horns only; and scarcely any two of their guns agreeing in calibre, they were obliged to hammer their balls to a



proper size for the pieces. The companies posted at Chelsea were immediately recalled.

About noon, at the Long Wharf in Boston, twenty-eight barges were filled with the principal part of the first detachment of British troops, consisting of the 5th, 38th, 43d, and 52d battalions of infantry, ten companies of grenadiers, and ten of light infantry. Some of these troops were taken from the transports, and were to land now for the first time since their arrival. The barges formed in parallel lines of single files, six resplendent pieces of cannon, and howitzers in the bows of the leading boats, with the gorgeous uniform, and brilliant armor of the troops, throwing back the splendor of the sun, as if in rivalry: they move in exact time and perfect order, and about one, land at Morton's Point; the novel and alarming spectacle filling the Americans with dismay.

Immediately on landing they discovered a disastrous mistake, most of the cannonballs sent over were too large for the pieces ; they were immediately sent back and a new supply obtained. At the same time, General Howe, the commander, discovering on his near approach the formidable nature of the enemy's position, their present numbers, and the troops marching on, requested a reinforcement of General Gage. These first troops, while waiting for the remainder of the detachment, were entirely unmolested, and very quietly dined, most of them for the last time, from their crowded and cumbersome knapsacks. About two, the remainder of the forces leave Winnisimmet Ferry, in the same formidable array of barges, and land at Morton's Point ; and soon afterward the reinforcements, a few companies of grenadiers and light infantry, the forty-seventh battalion, a battalion of marines, except a few of this corps who were pre-

paring to embark, land under the eastern end of Breed's Hill, at Madlin's ship-yard, the present navy yard. All these troops cannot be estimated at less than five thousand; if the corps were but half full, there were four thousand three hundred and fifty. While the enemy were landing, Putnam ordered Captain Knowlton, with the Connecticut troops, to take post behind a rail-fence, which ran across the tongue of land from Mystic River to the road about two hundred and fifty yards. In front of this line of fence were some apple-trees, and a few also in the rear. These troops pulled up the neighboring fences, and placing them near the one at which they were posted, threw in the new-mown grass between. A small part of this fence had stones under the rails to the height of two feet; the whole formed only the shadow of a protection. This rail-fence was one hundred and ninety yards in rear of the breastwork,

leaving a very extensive opening between the breastwork and rail-fence, by which the left flank of the troops at the breastwork was exposed to the enemy's fire, and about one hundred yards between the slough and rail-fence open to the advance of infantry; the only defence being a few standing trees, stones, or whatever could be found on the spot. This was the key of the American position.

The detachments in Charlestown were now recalled by Prescott, and took post at a cart-way, which ran from the road to the south-eastern angle of the redoubt. They placed the fences together, and threw in grass, as was done on the left.

The thundering cannonade of the enemy soon spread the information of an approaching engagement. The Americans in the neighborhood flocked to the scene, and the soldiers voluntarily ran to arms,

and entreated to be sent against the foe. Colonel Little's regiment had lately arrived from the county of Essex and the officers were not commissioned ; without awaiting orders, they left their quarters in Menotomy and Cambridge, marched to General Ward and tendered their services. The Connecticut troops were equally anxious to join their general; they were all under arms, and sent to headquarters for orders. But Ward informed them they had already the post of honor, as the British were expected to land near Inman's farm, their present position. The brave New Hampshire troops, at the same post, under Colonel Sargent, were also as earnest to be led against the enemy, and the Colonel sent the most pressing requests to Ward for permission to conduct them on.

Captain Callender with his artillery company was ordered to the hill, and, for greater caution, Gardner's regiment was

marched to Patterson's station, at the opening of the road to Lechmere Point, there to wait further orders. Doolittle's regiment had been stationed on the Charlestown road the night before, and was a little in advance of them.

Prescott had stretched the endurance and exertions of his detachment to the utmost of the human constitution. They had thrown up a defence good against muskets, and most of it against artillery. But the commanding summit of Bunker Hill, of vital importance in case of a retreat, was not yet fortified, though Putnam, mortified at the neglect of a position on which his success and reputation depended, had been incessant and unwearied in his efforts to have it accomplished; but in vain, as no reinforcements arrived. At length he ordered off a large detachment from the redoubt with the intrenching tools to break ground there. From experience

under the most distinguished masters of the day, he perfectly comprehended the importance of intrenching, seemed to have seized intuitively the learned maxims of Cæsar, and to have anticipated the result of such modern defences as Jackson's. Most of the detachment ordered off with the tools never returned to the lines.

Putnam, on perceiving the preparations of the enemy for an attack, again hastened to Cambridge for reinforcements, and had to pass through a galling enfilading fire of round, bar, and chain-shot, which thundered across the neck from the "Glasgow" frigate in the Charles River and two floating-batteries hauled close to the shore. He learned from General Ward the orders which had been sent to the New Hampshire troops at Medford, and immediately returned to his post.

At last the New Hampshire troops arrived; it was the policy of Stark to march

his men slowly, observing that "one fresh man in battle is better than ten fatigued ones." Putnam reserved a part of this force to throw up the work on Bunker Hill, and ordered the remainder to press on to the lines as quick as possible, and join the Connecticut troops at the rail-fence. Stark encouraged them by a short, spirited address, ordered three cheers to animate them; and they moved on rapidly to the line.

The intention of the enemy being now clearly pronounced by their landing in Charlestown, General Ward, reserving still his own regiment,—Putnam's, Sargent's, Patterson's, Gardner's, and part of Bridge's, from his caution lest an attack should be made at Cambridge,—dispatched the remainder of the troops as a reinforcement to Charlestown.

Near five thousand British troops had now landed, under the immediate com-



mand of General Howe. Under him were General Pigot; Colonels Nesbit, Abercrombie, Clarke; Majors Butler, Williams, Bruce, Spendlove, Smelt, Mitchell, Pitcairn, Short, Small, and Lord Rawdon, — all officers of renown. The troops were in columns, waiting the signal to advance. The hills rising from Boston Bay and overlooking both armies were covered by Americans, brought from a distance by anxious curiosity to witness a scene so sublime, and learn the event of a contest on which the fate of a new world depended; and many of them from a deeper interest in the fate of a parent, a brother, or husband engaged. The heights and the steeples in Boston were crowded in the same manner by the inhabitants and the British military; and many a soldier's wife witnessed the events with a melancholy foreboding that she was left a widow, and her home three thousand miles across the ocean.

“What tide of widows’ tears shall flow  
For those who fight no more !”

A cannonade and bombardment was opened from Boston on the camp at Roxbury to retain the Americans at their post who were there under arms.

The British artillery on Morton’s Hill opened on the Americans. Colonel Prescott ordered the men to keep under the cover of the works, but Lieutenant Spaulding standing by his side had his head completely shattered by a ball. Gridley’s pieces, which had fired a few useless shot from the redoubt against Copp’s Hill and the shipping, were now ordered out, and were carried with Callender’s to the space between the breastwork and rail-fence, and returned the fire of the British. The artillery companies were just enlisted from the infantry, and ignorant of their duty. The officers complained that their cartridges were unsuitable for the pieces; Gridley

drew off his to the rear, one of them being already disabled; and Callender was marching off over Bunker Hill to a secure place for preparing his ammunition in safety, when Putnam met him and ordered him instantly to his post. His men, however, were disgusted with a part of the service they did not understand. Most of them had muskets, and mingled with the infantry. The pieces were entirely deserted and left on Bunker Hill, from which position they were fired a few times on the enemy.

Colonel Little arrived with his troops; Putnam ordered them to their posts: Captain Warner's company to the rail-fence on the right of the redoubt, Captain Perkins to the exposed position between the breastwork and rail-fence on the left; the remainder found their places in the line. Colonel Jonathan Brewer, who had been a ranger in the French war; Colonel

Nixon, who had served in the same war; Colonel Woodbridge; and Major Moore of Doolittle's regiment, the colonel and lieutenant-colonel being absent,—brought on their troops, each about three hundred men. Colonel Woodbridge sent a detachment off to the right, in the main street of Charlestown, and carried orders to Major Moore to do the same, who accordingly sent one under Captain Wheeler. Colonel Reed sent a detachment also, under Captain Crosby.

Colonel Scammans, with a large regiment from Maine, ordered by General Ward to go where the fighting was, marched to Lechmere Point, understanding from some one that the enemy were landing there. On his arrival he was undeceived by General Whitcomb, who advised him to march to the hill. From error, or some other cause, he went to Cable Hill and took post there.

The veteran General Pomeroy heard the pealing artillery, and requested a horse of General Ward to carry him to the field, and one was instantly supplied. With his musket, he repaired immediately to the neck; inquiring of a sentry posted there, and viewing the ground and the tremendous fire across, he was alarmed, not for himself, but for the horse he had borrowed; he delivered him to a sentinel and coolly marched across. He advanced to the rail-fence; his approach gave new confidence to the men; they received him with the highest exultation, and the name of Pomeroy rang through the line. In early life he had been an ingenious mechanic, and many a soldier was supplied with arms of his manufacture.

The British now formed their columns, with their field train in centre, ready to advance on the American line.

Captain Ford arrived with his company.

He served under the veteran Lieutenant-colonel Parker and Major Brooks, had learned the duties of a soldier, and signalized himself in Lexington battle by killing five of the enemy. He was proceeding down Bunker Hill, when Putnam met him and was delighted with an aid so opportune; Callender's deserted cannon were on the hill, and he ordered Captain Ford with his company to draw them to the line. The captain remonstrated that "his men were entirely ignorant of the discipline and management of artillery." But the general persisting in his order, he obeyed; his company moved with the cannon, accompanied by the general himself, to the rail-fence.

Putnam was now joined by Warren, to whom he observed, "I'm sorry to see you here, General Warren. I wish you had left the day to us, as I advised you. From appearances we shall have a sharp time

of it; but since you are here, I'll receive your orders with pleasure." Warren replied: "I came only as a volunteer; I know nothing of your dispositions, and will not interfere with them; tell me where I can be most useful." Putnam, intent on his safety, directed him to the redoubt, observing, "You will be covered there." "Don't think," said Warren, "I come here to seek a place of safety; but tell me where the onset will be most furious." Putnam again pointed to the redoubt: "That," said he, "is the enemy's object. Prescott is there, and will do his duty, and if it can be defended, the day is ours; but, from long experience of the character of the enemy, I think they will ultimately succeed and drive us from the works; though, from the mode of attack they have chosen, we shall be able to do them infinite injury, and we must be prepared for a brave and orderly retreat when

we can maintain our ground no longer." Warren assented to his opinions, and, promising to be governed by them, went to the redoubt. The soldiers received him with loud hurrahs. Prescott offered him the command; but he had not yet received his commission, and tendered his services to the colonel as a volunteer, observing, "He was happy to learn service from a soldier of experience."

The field-pieces of the enemy opened furiously on the works, the signal for their army to move. Their columns advanced slowly, and halted at intervals, to give the artillery an opportunity to render a passage over the works practicable. Howe, remarkably tall, and a prominent mark, advanced two hundred yards in front of the troops to reconnoitre,

The American drums beat to arms, Putnam left his works, commenced on Bunker Hill, and led the troops into ac-



tion. The tune of the Americans at Bunker Hill was Yankee Doodle, and was now first employed by them.

Captain Walker (of Chelmsford) beat up for volunteers to accompany him down into Charlestown to hang on the left flank of the enemy. He had been detailed for guard duty the day before, and his company had been sent on without him under the lieutenant. The picket guard, of which he was the commander, had not been relieved on the day of the battle, and he could not brook the misfortune of being drawn for a place of safety, when his country required his services in the place of death. He made use of the most earnest persuasions with his lieutenant by repeated messengers, to exchange places with him, till at length he succeeded. He now collected about fifty kindred spirits, whom he led down as a forlorn-hope on the enemy's left and gave them five or six

rounds with the most deadly execution. But they were soon driven in with severe loss. The captain however escaped, and was determined to make another daring attack on the opposite flank of the enemy. He had the sagacity to discover the danger of their turning our left, by the shore of the Mystic, and changed his attack to that quarter; but was wounded and taken prisoner with Frost, one of his company, who was very badly wounded at the same time. They were carried to Boston jail, where the captain died of his wounds.

The British right wing, consisting of the fifth regiment, one of grenadiers, and another of light infantry, move under cover of the tongue of land, at the foot of it display, and advance in front toward the rail-fence; excepting nine of the light companies, who move by the right flank on the shore of the Mystic to turn the

American left. This attack was led by General Howe.

The left wing, composed of the fifty-second regiment, thirty-eighth, thirty-fifth, forty-seventh, three grenadier and three light companies, and the marines under cover of Breed's Hill, display, and are led by General Pigot against the redoubt and breastwork.

On a sudden, as they were advancing, the fire from their artillery ceased; Howe sent to inquire into the cause of this ill-timed remission, and learned, that owing to a fatal blunder, the cannon-balls sent over were too large for the pieces; but that they had grape-shot; and he ordered them forward to maintain their fire with grape.

The British lines soon opened to view, and the American marksmen were with difficulty restrained from firing. Putnam rode through the line, and ordered that no one should fire till they arrived within

eight rods, nor any one till commanded. "Powder was scarce and must not be wasted. They should not fire at the enemy till they saw the whites of their eyes, and then fire low, take aim at their waistbands. They were all marksmen, and could kill a squirrel at a hundred yards; reserve their fire, and the enemy were all destroyed. Aim at the handsome coats, pick off the commanders." The same orders were reiterated by Prescott at the redoubt, by Pomeroy, Stark, and all the veteran officers.

Putnam now, with the assistance of Captain Ford's company, opened his artillery upon them. He had on this day performed every species of service, and now turned cannonier, with splendid success, and to the highest satisfaction of his countrymen. Each company of artillery had been furnished twelve cartridges, and these were soon expended. He pointed

the cannon himself, the balls took effect on the enemy, and one case of canister made a lane through them. With wonderful courage the enemy closed their ranks, and coolly marched on to the attack.

The enemy were within gunshot of the redoubt; a few of the sharp-shooters could not resist the temptation and fired. Prescott was indignant at this contempt of his orders; waving his sword, he swore instant death against the first who should disobey; appealed to their well-known confidence in him, and promised to give them orders at the proper moment. His Lieutenant-Colonel Robinson, who, with Colonel Buttrick, had gallantly led the troops at Concord, ran round the top of the parapet, and threw up the muskets.

The enemy now at eight rods' distance only, the deadly muskets were levelled. Prescott commanded his men to take good aim, be sure of their mark and fire. He

was effectually obeyed. Nearly the whole front rank was swept away, and many a gallant officer laid low.

As the cloud of smoke passed away, the ground was seen covered with dead, and the wounded and dying exerting their last feeble remains of strength to crawl out of the line, many on their hands and knees, to save themselves. Rank succeeded rank, and returned the fire, but the odds was fearful; the Americans were well protected by the works; the efforts and courage of the enemy were in vain, and with reluctance they were at last compelled to retreat, as they were commanded to do by General Pigot himself.

Warren animated and encouraged the men, and with the rest of the officers, set them an example with his musket; there was scarcely an officer of any rank, excepting Putnam and Prescott, without one.

The British right wing arrived about the time of this attack on the redoubt to within one hundred yards of the Americans. They were throwing down a fence, when a few marksmen fired on them. Putnam enraged at this disobedience of an order on which the salvation of the army depended, rode to the spot, with his drawn sword threatening to cut down the first who dared to fire again without orders. The discharge from these few muskets, however, drew the fire from the enemy's line, which continued moving on, and when about eight rods from the fence, the fatal order was given; the fire of the Americans mowed them down with the same terrible severity as at the redoubt, the officers especially fell victims to their deadly aim.

The British fired their heaviest volleys of musketry with admirable coolness and regularity, but without aim, at the Americans, and almost every ball passed harmless

over them. Their artillery had stopped in the marsh near the brick kilns, and produced little effect. This wing of the army having covered the ground with their dead, were at length compelled to retreat; and the hurrah of victory re-echoed through the American line. So thorough was the defeat of the enemy, that many of them repaired to their boats. Fortunately for the Americans, the enemy neglected to charge with the bayonet; if, instead of displaying and firing, they had filled the intervals between their columns with light troops to keep the Americans under the works by an incessant fire, and rushed on at the charge, they must have secured an easy victory, especially as the Americans almost to a man were destitute of the bayonet.

General Ward had by this time dispatched reinforcements from Cambridge, but many of them did not reach the field.



The fire across the neck wore an aspect too terrific for raw troops to venture in it. Putnam flew to the spot to overcome their fears and hurry them on before the enemy returned. He entreated, encouraged, and threatened them; lashing his horse with the flat of his sword, he rode backwards and forwards across the neck, the balls threw up clouds of dust about him, and the soldiers were perfectly convinced that he was invulnerable, but were not equally conscious of being so themselves. Some of these troops, however, ventured over.

The battalion of artillery under Major Gridley had proceeded but a few hundred yards down the road to Charlestown when they were halted, and he determined not to proceed to the hill, but wait and cover the retreat, which he considered inevitable. He was young, inexperienced, and totally inadequate to the important command which had been conferred on him in compliment

to his father Colonel Gridley. With his two famous brass pieces, which alone had horses attached to them, he advanced farther down the road. While the artillery was halted in this situation, Colonel Frye (who was absent from his regiment on duty the day before, but, the battle approaching, had found his way to the field), riding from Charlestown, galloped up to them, and demanded of the senior captain (Trevett) "why this unseasonable halt?" He was astonished at the reply, and ordered them instantly to the field. He also animated their courage by the glorious recollection, "This day thirty years since, I was at the taking of Louisbourg when it was surrendered to us; it is a fortunate day for America, we shall certainly beat the enemy."

The artillery proceeded. Gridley joined them; but his aversion to entering into the engagement was invincible, and he or-

dered them on to Cobble Hill to fire at the "Glasgow" and floating batteries. Captain Trevett absolutely refused obedience, ordered his men to follow him, and marched for the lines. Colonel Mansfield, who had been ordered with his regiment to reinforce the troops at Charlestown, being commanded by Gridley to cover his pieces, which would be hazarded without infantry to cover them, complied in violation of his orders.

Putnam left the neck for Bunker Hill, to bring up the reinforcements. He there found Colonel Gerrish with part of his regiment and other scattered troops. The men were disorganized and dispersed on the west side of the hill, and covered by the summit from the fire. Putnam ordered them on to the lines ; he entreated and threatened them, but all in vain. The men complained they had not officers ; he offered to lead them on himself, but "the cannon were deserted, and they stood no chance without them."

The British general had now rallied and reorganized his troops, who appeared again before the murderous lines which had already compelled them to retreat. They had nearly the same obstacles to overcome as before: their cumbrous knapsacks, arms and accoutrements of one hundred and twenty-five pounds weight, tall unmown grass, and the sun blazing in front of them, they had to contend against, as well as an enemy their equals. One new obstacle they had to pass, — the dead bodies of their fellow-soldiers, which covered the ground.

Major Small, who had been sent to Boston for the purpose, returned with the last of the reinforcements, a few companies of the marines, and was accompanied by an eminent surgeon, Doctor Jeffries.

The Americans were now more confident and perfect than before in a manœuvre which had been crowned with success. It was indeed perfectly simple, but equally

fatal to the foe. They received orders to reserve their fire till the enemy approached still nearer than before. At six rods only they were permitted to return the fire. The British artillery approached by the narrow road between the tongue of land and Breed's Hill, within three hundred yards of the rail-fence, and almost in a line with the redoubt, and opened on the lines to prepare a way for their infantry.

Vast columns of smoke were now observed over Charlestown, and passed to the north over the American lines. General Howe on his first advance had sent word to General Burgoyne and General Clinton on Copps Hill, that his left flank was annoyed by musketry from Charlestown, and desired them to burn it down. A carcass was fired, but fell short near the ferry way ; a second fell in the street, and the town was on fire. The conflagration was completed by a detachment of men who landed from

the "Somerset." The spectacle of the flames ascending on the spire of the church was remembered by the American soldiers and spoken of years afterward. The advance of the enemy, however, was not obscured by the smoke from Charlestown; they were in full view of the Americans, who suffered them to approach still nearer than before. They soon commenced a regular and tremendous volley by platoons, and their fire became general. But their aim was too elevated, and the Americans were hidden behind the works. Some of their balls, however, took effect, and a number of the privates fell. Colonel Brewer, Colonel Nixon, and Lieutenant-Colonel Buckminster were wounded, and Major Moore was mortally wounded. Not a drop of water could be found for him nearer than Charlestown Neck, to which place two of his youngest men were immediately dispatched.

The fire of the Americans prostrated whole ranks of the British officers and men, which was borne with astonishing fortitude ; but it could be withstood but a few moments only. Nearly a thousand of their number had fallen, with an incredible proportion of the bravest officers.

General Howe still led on his men in the hottest of the battle. His aide-de-camp Balfour was wounded. His volunteer aid, Gordon, and Captain Addison, a descendant of the author of the "Spectator," were slain, and almost every other officer of his staff or near him was shot, and he was compelled to follow his army, who again retreated and yielded their enemy a second time the joys of victory.

The gallant Major Small was left standing alone, every one shot down about him. The never-erring muskets were levelled at him, when Putnam at the instant appeared.

He threw up the muskets with his sword, and begged the men to spare that officer, as dear to him as a brother, and his friend retired unhurt.

Colonel Little in the redoubt was covered with blood from one of his men (Story, of Ipswich), shot by his side.

The ammunition of the Americans was now expended. Prescott found a few artillery cartridges, which he distributed to his men, and they determined to show a resolute front to the enemy, to club their muskets, and even employ the stones thrown up with the parapet against them.

General Ward was without staff officers to bear his commands, excepting one aid and a secretary, who were the whole day on full speed between Breed's Hill and headquarters. Loss and neglect of orders were the inevitable consequence. Gardner's regiment and others who had been



left between Cambridge and Charlestown, to wait further orders, were overlooked. The battle was raging, and no orders arrived. He called his officers together, and offered to lead them into battle; they consented to follow him with about three hundred men. The colonel marched them on to Bunker Hill, where they were met by Putnam. He ordered them to take up the intrenching tools and complete the works he had commenced there, declaring, however, his conviction that the enemy would not rally again, they had been twice so thoroughly beaten.

Colonel Scammans remained on Cobble Hill, and sent a serjeant and other messengers to General Putnam, to see if he was wanted in the battle.

The detachment of Gerrish's regiment from Cambridge marched for the lines under the Adjutant, Ferbiger, a Danish soldier of experience.

Charlestown being burnt, the detachment there quitted their post, and joined the troops at the lines.

General Howe gave his men orders to prepare again to advance. Some of the officers remonstrated, that it would be mere butchery to lead them on again, but the generals, and nearly every officer, were indignant at the most distant suspicion of their yielding the victory to these rebels, an undisciplined rabble of inferior numbers, against whom they had poured out every epithet of contempt. To conquer or die was their resolve. The overloaded knapsacks were relinquished; firing with musketry was prohibited; and a charge with the bayonet resorted to. The attack was to be more concentrated; while the troops at the rail-fence were amused by a show of force, the grand effort was to be against the redoubt and breastwork, and especially on the right flank.

General Clinton now joined his countrymen. From Copps Hill he had observed the double rout of his countrymen, and particularly that the two celebrated battalions, the marines and forty-seventh, were staggered and wavering. Without waiting for orders, he threw himself into a boat and passed over.

Howe again commanded a forward movement to scale the works, and rush on the enemy with the bayonet. He came to the left to lead on to the redoubt himself. Clinton joined General Pigot and the marines on the left to turn the right flank of the enemy. Howe at last discovered the most vulnerable point, and the key of the enemy's position; the artillery were ordered to advance still farther than before on their old route, and turn the left of the breastwork, to enfilade the line.

The Americans made every preparation possible to repel this last desperate effort

of the enemy. Putnam again rode to the rear, and exhausted every art and effort to bring on the scattered reinforcements. Captain Bayley, only, of Gerrish's regiment, reached the lines. The general ordered Colonel Gardner's regiment into action; the colonel commanded his men to throw down the intrenching tools, and rush on. He was just descending into the engagement when he received a wound, which proved mortal. He gave his last solemn injunction to his men to conquer or die; and a detachment were carrying him off the ground, when he was met by his son, second lieutenant of Captain Trevett, marching on, a mere youth of nineteen. The affectionate son in agony at the desperate situation of his father was anxiously desirous to assist him off the field; but was prohibited from doing this by his father, who, notwithstanding he was conscious that his wound was mortal, yet encour-

aged his son to disregard it, reminding him that he was engaged in a glorious cause, and whatever were the consequences must march on, and do his duty. The distracted son obeyed his parent's last command, and in the battle now raging, proved himself worthy of him, by a fearless imitation of his example. In consequence of the loss of the colonel his regiment did not reach the lines. Captain Harris's company only, with a few others of the troops on the left, went to the rail-fence. Captain Trevett, who had lost one of his pieces on Bunker Hill, by a cannon shot, marched to the rail-fence with the other.

The enemy stripped off their knapsacks, and many of them their coats; the artillery pushed on by the road on the north, the forty-seventh and marines near the road on the south side of the hill, and the remains of the royal Irish and other regiments and part of the grenadiers and light infan-

try in front. Their past efforts had exhausted the strength and spirit of many of the soldiers who lingered in the rear, and their gallant officers were compelled to urge them on with their swords. Some of the less resolute fired their pieces, but the great masses obeyed their orders, and with firmness moved on to the charge. They arrived under the fire of the Americans, who improved to advantage their last opportunity for vengeance. General Howe received a ball in the foot, but continued to animate his men.

Colonel Abercrombie, who commanded the grenadiers, Majors Williams and Spendlove were slain; and to the noble heart of Abercrombie was Putnam so dear as a soldier, patriot, and friend, that dying he remembered him, and enjoined it on his surrounding countrymen, "If you take General Putnam alive, don't hang him, for he's a brave fellow."

Near the top of Breed's Hill were a few houses, which escaped the general conflagration of the town; these were manned by the Americans, who, from this cover, annoyed the British extremely on their advance, and made great havoc on their left flank, before they were able to surround the redoubt.

The artillery advanced toward the open space between the breastwork and rail-fence; this ground was defended by some brave Essex troops, covered only by scattered trees. With resolution and deadly aim they poured the most destructive volleys on the enemy. The cannon, however, turned the breastwork, enfiladed the line, and sent their balls through the open gateway or sally-port, directly into the redoubt, under cover of which the troops at the breastwork were compelled to retire.

The enemy bravely bore the deadly fire, and continually closing his broken ranks,

deliberately advanced on every side of the redoubt, except the north. They were now under the eastern side of the redoubt and covered from the fire. The Americans retired to the opposite side to take them as they rose. Lieutenant Prescott, nephew of the colonel, received a ball through the arm; it hung broken and useless by his side. The colonel ordered him to content himself with encouraging his men. But he contrived to load his piece, and was passing by the sally-port to rush against the enemy, when a cannon ball cut him to pieces. A few only of the Americans had a charge of ammunition remaining. They had sent for a supply in vain; a barrel and a half only were in the magazine. They resorted next to stones, but these served only to betray their weakness, and lent new energy to the foe.

Young Richardson, of the royal Irish, was the first to mount the works, and was



instantly shot down; the front rank, which succeeded, shared the same fate. Among the foremost of the leaders was Major Pitcairn, who exultingly cried, "The day is ours;" when Salem, a black soldier, and a number of others, shot him through and he fell. It was he who caused the first effusion of blood at Lexington.

Pigot ran up the south-eastern corner of the redoubt, assisted by a tree left standing there, and desperately led on his men. Troops succeeded troops over the parapet, and Prescott exhausted every resource to repel them, even with the butts of his guns. He had twice conquered the enemy. Perfectly careless of his own life, he had no right to trifle with the lives of his men; and, instead of a useless waste of life, he ordered a retreat.

It was not till the battle was near over, that General Ward ordered down his own regiment, Putnam's, and Sargent's;

but before they could arrive, the battle ended.

The veteran Gridley now received a ball through the leg, and was carried off. He had served all night at the intrenchments, and assisted all day in defending his own works. Prescott's troops fought their way through the surrounding enemy. One of the men, without ammunition, perceived Lieutenant Prescott's loaded musket by its deceased owner; one of the enemy opposed his passage, seizing the musket he brought his antagonist to the ground. Colonel Bridge, who came with the first detachment, was one of the last to retreat, and was twice severely wounded in the head and neck by a broadsword. His lieutenant-colonel, the veteran Parker, was left mortally wounded in the redoubt.

Major Moore's soldiers found no one at the neck to supply them with drink for him; they entered a store, the owner was

in the cellar to secure himself from the cannonade, and refused to come up; finding spirit and water, however, they hastened back to witness only that all their efforts were but labor lost, the enemy being in the redoubt, and Moore in the last extremity; his men made every effort to remove him, but he ordered them to leave him and save themselves, as he had but a moment to live; they were immediately compelled to do this by the enemy, in the midst of whom they saw him for the last time, as they retired, on the ground.

The British now enjoyed the satisfaction of responding to the hurrahs of victory, which had been twice enjoyed by the Americans, and expressed their melancholy exultation by a feeble hurrah.

General Warren lingered to the last. He animated the men to the most desperate daring; and when hope itself had fled, he still disdained to fly. With reluctance

he slowly followed his countrymen, and seemed to court death from the enemy.

As he left the redoubt he was recognized by his friend, Major Small, who honorably repaid the debt of gratitude he owed the enemy. [See page 48.] He called to Warren, for God's sake to stop and save his life; Warren turned and seemed to recognize him, but still continued on. Small ordered his men not to fire at him, and threw up the muskets with his sword, but in vain, the fatal ball had sped. Eighty yards from the redoubt Warren received a musket ball through the head, which killed him instantly.

Colonel Scammans arrived at last on Bunker Hill with part of his regiment. Putnam ordered these troops into action, but it was too late, and they joined in the retreat.

Gardner's regiment had now approached near the fort; Major Jackson, who had served in the former war with the Brit-

ish, and was well acquainted with their officers, being in advance, was immediately recognized by one of them as they issued from the redoubt, who levelled his piece at him; Jackson at the same instant levelled at his antagonist, and they fired together. The ball passed through Major Jackson's side, being partially glanced by his sword-belt, which preserved his life, but the British officer was slain.

The British came on, exhausted by their desperate efforts under a blazing sun, and broken by the well-directed fire. They had not force to employ the bayonet, and were too much broken and mingled with the enemy to fire their pieces. Their right and left wings were indeed facing each other, with the Americans between; their fire would have cut down both friend and foe. While they formed themselves anew, the Americans collected and made a brave and orderly retreat. Putnam threw him-

self between the retreating force and the enemy, who were but twelve rods from him. Lieutenant-Colonel Ward reached the rail-fence with a few troops, while some of his companies under Captains Cushing, Smith, and Washburn, between Bunker and Breed's Hills, courageously covered the retreat by a brave and well-directed fire ; they were joined by Captain Lunt of Little's regiment, just arrived, Captains Chester and Coit, with fresh troops, and other soldiers, whose ammunition was not expended, who kept the enemy at bay ; but a great number of these troops were killed or wounded.

The Americans had retreated about twenty rods before the enemy had time to rally and pour in a destructive fire on them, which destroyed more than they had during the day.

The American left wing were congratulating themselves on their victory, when

their flank was opened by the retreat of the right. The enemy pressed on them and they were in their turn compelled to retire. Putnam covered their retreat with his Connecticut troops and others just arrived.

General Pomeroy continued to animate the men, and cut down the enemy himself, till a ball shattered his musket. The retreat having commenced, with backward step he shouldered the fragments of his piece, and carried off his men, encouraging them to pour in their formidable fire on the foe.

Captain Trevett, like Callender, was deserted by his men. His lieutenants, Swasey and Gardner, stood by him, with but seven others, one of whom was Moses Porter, already a promising artillerist. He persuaded about thirty of the infantry to join in saving one of his pieces, the other he was compelled to abandon.

The Charlestown company of Gardner's regiment was the last to retreat.

One piece of cannon at the neck opened on the enemy and covered the retreat. But the British were in no condition, and discovered no inclination, to renew the engagement, or pursue their advantage, except by a formidable fire from their field-pieces on Bunker Hill, where they remained, and lay on their arms during the night. The same was done by most of the Americans on Prospect Hill, directly in the face of the enemy, and by Reed's and Stark's troops on Winter Hill.

The number of the Americans during the battle has been estimated at thirty-five hundred who joined in the battle, and five hundred more who covered the retreat. The British loss was about fifteen hundred; Gage acknowledges but ten hundred and fifty-four.



On the part of the Americans, one hundred and fifteen were killed and missing, three hundred and five were wounded, and thirty were taken prisoners; our whole loss being four hundred and fifty.

The event of the battle proved General Burgoyne to be a true prophet as to its being "a final loss to the British empire in America." In a "History of the present War in America," by the Rev. James Murray, of Newcastle, England, the author says in reference to the British who fell in this battle, —

"It was a matter of grievous reflection, that such brave men, many of whom had contributed to exalt the dignity of their country in subduing her enemies and enlarging her territories, should have fallen in supporting a power that was seeking to enslave and ruin the British empire. These brave British officers found to their sad experience what wonderful exertions the

spirit of liberty will produce, even in unexperienced and raw troops. The provincials, who had been rated as cowards and poltroons in the ministerial vocabulary, under the influence of the powerful spirit of liberty shewed instances of wisdom, courage, and intrepidity that would not have disgraced troops of more experience and reputation. The consequences of this action were of more advantage to those that were supposed to be vanquished than to the conquerors; for the provincials began to find that they could face the king's troops, and also to make some impression upon them; and they also discovered that they could retreat without being pursued by the king's troops, which had confirmed them in the opinion that their enemies had suffered severely."

The Rev. William Montague, when Rector of Christ Church, in Boston, visited England, and spent part of the year 1789

and '90 in London, was a frequent visitor at the house of the Hon. Harrison Gray (who had been Treasurer of the province before the Revolution), where he became acquainted with Arthur Savage, Esq., who gave him the bullet which caused the death of Dr. Joseph Warren, which is now in the possession of his son, William Henry Montague, Esq., who has kindly loaned for this publication, the original deposition, of which the following is a copy:—

I, William Montague of Dedham, County of Norfolk, State of Massachusetts, clergyman, do certify to whom it may concern that in the year 1789 or '90 I was in London and became acquainted with a Mr. Savage formerly an Officer of the Customs for the Port of Boston and who left there when the Royalists & Royal troops evacuated that town in 1776.

When in London Mr. Savage gave me a leaden ball which is now in my possession with the following account of it, Viz. "On the the morning of the 18th of June 1775 after the

battle of Bunker or Breed's Hill I with a number [of] other Royalists and British Officers among whom was Gen. Burgoyne went over from Boston to Charlestown to view the battle field. Among the fallen we found the body of Dr. Joseph Warren with whom I had been personally acquainted, when he fell he fell across a rail and this ball I took from his body and as I never shall visit Boston again I will give it to you to take to America where it will be valuable as a relic of your Revolution; his sword & belt with some other articles were taken by some of the Officers present & I believe brought to England."

W<sup>m</sup> MONTAGUE.

Norfolk ss. Dedham, March 5th, 1833. The above named William Montague appeared before me and made oath to the above statement.

SHERMAN LELAND,  
*Justice of the Peace.*



## GENERAL BURGoyNE'S ACCOUNT OF THE BATTLE.

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"BOSTON is a peninsula, joined to the main land only by a narrow neck, which, on the first troubles, General Gage fortified; arms of the sea and the harbor form the rest: on the other side of one of these arms, to the north, is Charlestown (or rather was, for it is now rubbish), and over it a large hill, which is also, like Boston, a peninsula. To the south of the town is still a larger scope of ground, containing three hills, joining also to the main land by a tongue, and called Dorchester Neck, the neck above described; both north and south (in the soldier phrase) commanded the town, that is, gave an opportunity of erecting batteries above any we can make against them, and consequently are much more advantageous. It was absolutely necessary we should make ourselves masters of these heights, and we

proposed to begin with Dorchester, because, from the particular situation of the batteries and shipping, it would evidently be effected without any considerable loss; every thing was disposed accordingly. My two colleagues and myself (who, by the bye, have never differed in one jot of military sentiment) had, in concert with General Gage, formed the plan. Howe was to land the transports on one point, Clinton in the centre, and I was to cannonade from the causeway, or the neck, each to take advantage of the circumstances. The operations must have been very easy: this was to have been executed on the 18th. On the 17th, at dawn of day, we found the enemy had pushed intrenchments with great diligence, during the night, on the heights of Charlestown, and we evidently saw that every hour gave them fresh strength; it therefore became necessary to alter our plan, and attack on that side. Howe, as second in command, was detached, with about two thousand men, and landed on the outward side of the peninsula, covered with shipping, without opposition; he was to advance from thence up the hill, which was over Charlestown, where the strength of the enemy lay. He had under him Brigadier-General Pigot. Clinton and myself

took our stand (for we had not any fixed post) in a large battery opposite to Charlestown; and commanding it, and also reaching to the height above it, and thereby facilitating Howe's attack. Howe's disposition was extremely soldier-like—in my opinion it was perfect: as his first arm advanced up, they met with a thousand impediments from strong fences, and were much exposed. They were also very much hurt by the musketry from Charlestown, though Clinton and I did not perceive it, till Howe sent us word by a boat, and desired us to set fire to the town, which was immediately done. We threw a parcel of shells, and the whole was instantly in flames. Our battery afterwards kept an incessant fire on the heights; it was seconded by a number of frigates, floating batteries, and one ship of the line.

“And now ensued one of the greatest scenes of war that can be conceived, if we look to the height; Howe's corps ascending the hill in the face of intrenchments, and in a very disadvantageous ground, was much engaged, and to the left the enemy pouring in fresh troops by thousands over the land; and in the arm of the sea our ships and floating batteries cannonading them; straight before us a large and noble town



in one blaze; the church-steeples, being made of timber, were great pyramids of fire above the rest; behind us the church-steeples and heights of our camp covered with spectators. The enemy all anxious suspense; the roar of cannon, mortars, musketry; the crash of churches, ships upon the stocks, and whole streets falling together in ruin to fill the ear; the storm of the redoubts, with the objects above described, to fill the eye; and the reflection that, perhaps, a defeat was a final loss to the British empire in America, to fill the mind, made the whole a picture, and complication of horror and importance beyond any thing that came to my lot to be witness to. I much lament my nephew's absence: it was a sight for a young soldier that the longest service may not furnish again; and had he been with me he would likewise have been out of danger; for except two cannon-balls that went a hundred yards over our head, we were not in any part of the direction of the enemy's shot. A moment of the day was critical. Howe's left was staggered, two battalions had been sent to reinforce them, but we perceived them on a beach, seeming in embarrassment which way to march; Clinton, then next for business, took the part without waiting for

orders, to throw himself into a boat to head them; he arrived in time to be of service; the day ended with glory, and the success was most important, considering the ascendancy it gives the regular troops; but the loss was uncommon among the officers, considering the numbers engaged."





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